

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1683
INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

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EO 11652 NA
TAGS SPOP BR
SUBJECT: LATEST OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN FAMILY PLANNING IN BRAZIL

SUMMARY: AFTER A SERIES OF OCCASIONALLY CONTRADICTORY PRESS REPORTS, FOLLOWED BY DENIALS AND LATERR BY CONFIRMATION, THE MINISTERS OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE, PAULO MACHADO AND NASCIMENTO E SILVA, FINALLY ANNOUNCED THROUGH THE BRAZILIAN TV AND PRESS THAT AN OFFICIALLY-SPONSORED FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM MAY BE ADOPTED IN BRAZIL SHORTLY. THE PROGRAM PROPOSAL WILL REPORTEDLY BE SUBMITTED SOON TO THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (CDS) OF THE GOVERNMENT FOR CONSIDERATION AND, SUBSEQUENTLY, FOR PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL. THE STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS MACHADO AND NASCIMENTO E SILVA ON TV AND AS QUOTED IN THE BRAZILIAN PRESS ARE PROVIDED BELOW. END SUMMARY.

1. THE MINISTER OF HEALTH HAS PUBLICLY CONFIRMED THAT THE GOB IS STUDYING THE FEASIBILITY OF ADOPTING A NATIONWIDE FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM IN BRAZIL IN THE NEAR FUTURE. SUCH A PROGRAM WOULD HAVE A STRICTLY MEDICAL NATURE (I.E., MAKE CONTRACEPTIVE TECHNOLOGY AVAILABLE, WITHOUT ADVOCACY OR COERCION, EMPHASIZING THE HEALTH ASPECTS), ACCORDING TO THE MINISTER, AND SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED WITH BIRTH CONTROL PROGRAMS. HE NOTED THAT WHAT HIS
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MINISTRY HAS IN MIND IS TO FIND "DEMOCRATIC MECHANISMS" THOUGH WHICH THE POOR MAY HAVE ACCESS TO THE SAME CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS AS THOSE AVAILABLE TO THE MORE AFFLUENT CLASSES, WHICH ARE ALREADY USING FAMILY PLANNING PRACTICES. THIS GOB POSITION, ACCORDING TO MINISTER MACHADO, IS IN LINE WITH THE POSITION OFFICIALLY ADOPTED BY BRAZIL AT BUCHAREST IN 1974. THE MINISTER OF HEALTH IS REPORTED CONVINCED THAT ANY METHOD OF CONTRACEPTION WHICH MAY BE ADOPTED

SHOULD BE REVERSIBLE. HE IS PERSONALLY OPPOSED TO TUBAL LIGATION, VASECTOMY AND OTHER SURGICAL MEANS OF CONTRACEPTION. HE THINKS, HOWEVER, THAT EACH INDIVIDUAL SHOULD BE FREE TO CHOOSE THE METHOD WHICH BEST SUITS HIS CULTURAL OR RELIGIOUS POINTS OF VIEW.

2. HOWEVER, THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL WELFARE, GENERALLY KNOWN AS AN ADVOCATE OF FAMILY PLANNING, HAS BEEN QUOTED BY JORNAL DO BRASIL OF APRIL 25, 1977, AS HAVING STATED THAT "A GOVERNMENT DECISION TO ADOPT A FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM CANNOT BE LIMITED TO THE MEDICAL ASPECT OF THE QUESTION, BUT HAS TO TAKE ALL OTHER ASPECTS INTO CONSIDERATION, SUCH AS THE ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECTS". MINISTER NASCIMENTO E SILVA REPORTEDLY WENT ON TO SAY THAT "EVEN A PROJECT OF ORIENTATION AND GUIDANCE FOR THE POOR DEPENDS ON ADOPTION OF A DEMOCRATIC POLICY, SINCE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON FAMILY PLANNING LEADS TO LIMITATION OF THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN". THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL WELFARE WAS FURTHER QUOTED AS STATING THAT "IF THE GOB ESTABLISHES A FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM AS AN OFFICIAL POLICY, IT WILL HAVE TO CHANGE ITS INTERNATIONAL POSITION ADOPTED AT BUCHAREST", SINCE THE BRAZILIAN POSITION PROVIDES THAT A COUPLE SHOULD BE "FREE TO CHOOSE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN IT WANTS, FREE FROM COERCION AND IN THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHT OF AN INDIVIDUAL TO PLAN THE SIZE OF HIS FAMILY". THE MINISTER CLAIMED THAT THIS POSITION HAS BEEN VIOLATED FOR SOME TIME BY THE EXISTING AGREEMENTS BETWEEN SOME STATE SECRETARIATS OF HEALTH AND BEMFAM. HE STATED THAT HE CANNOT SEE ANY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FAMILY PLANNING AND BIRTH CONTROL PROGRAMS, ALTHOUGH HE BELIEVES THAT WHATEVER THE PROGRAM MAY BE, IT WILL BENEFIT THE BRAZILIAN SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM, WHICH HAS BEEN OVERLOADED BY THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEMAND FOR ASSISTANCE TO THE MATERNAL-CHILD GROUP. COMMENT: NASCIMENTO E SILVA SEEMS TO BELIEVE THAT AN OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT PROGRAM, IN CONTRAST TO A PURELY PRIVATE PROGRAM, CANNOT HELP BUT CONTAIN ELEMENTS OF ADVOCACY OF BIRTH CONTROL, IF NOT COERCION.

3. "O ESTADO DE SAO PAULO" ALSO REPORTED RECENTLY THAT THE GOB HAS RESOURCES UNDER THE SECOND NATIONAL PLAN FOR DEVELOPMENT (PND) TO ESTABLISH A NATIONAL FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM, PERHAPS AS SOON AS THIS YEAR. THE PAPER GOES ON TO SAY THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO ADOPT A NATIONAL FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM IN THE NEAR FUTURE IS AIMED AT REPLACING BEMFAM'S ACTIVITIES IN THE INTERIOR OF THE COUNTRY AND, AT THE SAME TIME, "TO PUT AN END TO THE INTERESTS OF PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS FINANCED BY EXTERNAL SOURCES WHICH DO NOT ALWAYS MEET THE NEEDS OF THE COUNTRY".

4. SOURCES FROM THE NATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY INSTITUTE (INPS) HAVE ALSO BEEN QUOTED IN THE PRESS AS STATING THAT INSTITUTE WOULD BE PREPARED TO PUT INTO PRACTICE, IN ONE OR TWO MONTHS,

A FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM AS PAR OF THE NATIONAL PROGRAM FOR FOOD AND NUTRITION (PRONAM) TO BE LAUNCHED IN MAY OR JUNE 1977. ACCORDING TO THOSE SOURCES, THE INPS IS ONLY WAITING FOR BOG'S "GREEN LIGHT".

5. COMMENT: THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THAT MINISTERS OF STATE HAVE PUBLICLY AND OFFICIALLY ADMITTED THAT THE GOB IS STUDYING THE FEASIBILITY OF ADOPTING FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAMS IN THE NEAR FUTURE IN BRAZIL. THE REPORTED IDFFERENCES OF OPINION BETWEEN THE MINISTERS OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE REGARDING THE PROPER FOCUS OF THE GOB'S FUTURE PLANNING PROGRAMS ARE GENERALLY VIEWED BY BRAZILIAN EXPERTS AS A COMPETITION BETWEEN THOSE TWO MINISTRIES FOR THE LEADING ROLE IN THE FIELD. THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH HAS REGULATORY JURISDICTION IN THIS FIELD, WHILE THE MINISTRY FOR SOCIAL WELFARE WOULD BE THE EXECUTIVE AGENCY THROUGH TE INPS. IN A MOVE APPARENTLY DESIGNED TO ASSURE ITS CONTROL OF THE SITUATION, THE MINISTER OF HEALTH RECENTLY APPEARED ON PRIME TIME TV TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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REITERATE CATEGORICALLY THAT ANY OFFICIAL FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM IN BRAZIL WOULD HAVE STRICTLY MEDICAL CHARACTER. END COMMENT.

6. EMBASSY WAS ADVISED BY DR RODRIGUES OF BEMFAM THAT MINISTER OF SOCIAL WELFARE NASCIMENTO E SILVA WILL BE MAKING PRESENTATION ON FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM AT NEXT CDS SESSION, UTILIZING MATERIAL PREPARED FOR HIM BY BEMFAM. CRIMMINS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FAMILY PLANNING, PRESS CONFERENCES, MINISTER COUNSELORS, PROGRAMS (PROJECTS)
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Disposition History: n/a
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